

Fighting For Equality In Employment - Jerusha Mather

Jerusha Mather was not expected to ever talk or walk due to a Cerebral Palsy diagnosis. Now a neuroscientist and a third-year Ph.D. candidate, she has been unable to gain entry into any medical program, even though she is qualified.

Petition

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Transcription:

Jerusha Mather 0:00

Because of COVID, there was a very, very big delay. All my Ph.D. got delayed it wasn't the ideal situation for me.

Bill Gasiamis 0:14

So there's another two years to go and you will be a doctor?

Jerusha Mather 0:18

Yeah I can't believe it.

Bill Gasiamis 0:24

It's such a great thing to work towards, and being a doctor in your field and

putting so much time and effort into your studies. The next thing is considered to be able to work in the field that you've spent so long studying and it's silly that you're allowed to do all this study, work towards your doctorate and become a doctor in your field and then not be able to work in the field that you are highly qualified to work in.

Intro 1:01

This is the recovery after stroke podcast, with Bill Gasiamis, helping you navigate recovery after stroke.

Bill Gasiamis 1:15

Hello, and welcome to episode 201 of the recovery after stroke podcast. The previous episode was a great milestone and I hope that this episode is the beginning of the road to the next 100 where the stroke survivor gets to share their story on the road to recovery after stroke. And supporters of stroke survivors be they're caregivers or professionals from the medical and rehabilitation fields can also get on the podcast and share the role that they play in this space and how they support stroke survivors.

Introduction - **Jerusha Mather**



Bill Gasiamis 1:45

Now my guest today is Jerusha Mathers who is on a mission to change the way people with disabilities are treated in the medical field by prospective employers. Highly qualified Jerusha feels as though she has been discriminated against when it comes to gaining employment in her chosen field. And she is taking the fight all

the way to the highest court of the land. So I really appreciate you reaching out and sending me the email.

Jerusha Mather 2:14

I wanna thank you for having me today.

Bill Gasiamis 2:19

You're welcome. And I didn't know how to help you. I didn't know how to support your cause. But I really appreciate your cause. Because your cause if I understood correct, is to raise awareness about discrimination for people such as yourself, who are quite capable of being involved and being employed in the medical field, but are often overlooked. is that correct?

Jerusha Mather 2:54

Yeah. Definitely. There's a lot of discrimination, a lot of bullying and harassment in the medical field and that's what I am passionate about changing. Just raising awareness about it. I personally have had a long game with this, so it's been really up and down.

Bill Gasiamis 3:40

Tell me about your qualifications. What are you studying? And what are you qualified for at the moment?

Non-invasive Brain Stimulation

Jerusha Mather 3:47

I am currently doing a PhD in Medical Science. I am researching about Non-invasive Brain Stimulation, and strength training. And I really want to make a difference and I really hope my research will make a difference. And really help people.

Bill Gasiamis 4:34

Yeah, fantastic. So you're studying non-invasive brain stimulation. Did you call it?

Jerusha Mather 4:48

Yes.

Bill Gasiamis 4:51

What does that involve?

Jerusha Mather 4:54

Well, it involves putting something on. And stimulating the brain to make it improve it's function.

Bill Gasiamis 5:14

Okay, so the aim is to stimulate the brain to improve function is this particular device something that sits on the outside of the head and helps to for example light up the rest of the brain or different parts of the brain that are not lighting up appropriately or not activated appropriately.

Jerusha Mather 5:37

Yeah that's correct it is really wonderful because technology is really helpin with working the gap, and this particular technology is really good, like, really cool it will make a difference in people's lives.

Jerusha Mather Had A Cerebral Palsy

Bill Gasiamis 6:27

Yeah, fantastic. So tell me about your situation and the condition that you live with. So what is the thing that you live with every day?

Jerusha Mather 6:40

I have cerebral palsy which means sometimes I speak differently and I move a little bit differently, but apart from that, I am independent and very capable.

Bill Gasiamis 7:07

So is cerebral palsy is something that you were born with. Was it as a result of your delivery during birth?

Jerusha Mather 7:14

Yeah. It was something that I was born with it caused complications to my brain when I was a baby. And I don't really know what happened. But my mom told me that after my birth, I turned yellow, and I got severe jaundice. Which led to the cerebral palsy but I think when I was a little girl the doctor said I would never walk or talk but I proved them wrong.

Bill Gasiamis 8:46

Yeah, I love it. So cerebral palsy, according to a Google search, as soon as I do a Google search, according to the CDC, in America says, a cerebral palsy is a group

of disorders that affects a person's ability to move and maintain balance and posture. Cerebral palsy is the most common motor disability in childhood. Cerebral means to have to do with the brain, Palsy means weakness or problems using the muscles.

Jerusha Mather 9:22

Yeah that's correct.

Bill Gasiamis 9:25

Now I imagine that people that don't understand cerebral palsy make the assumption that you also have an intellectual disability.

Jerusha Mather 9:38

Not really I don't have intellectual disability like I am very intelligent and I really like pushing myself and really tell people, what we can do.

Bill Gasiamis 10:10

You definitely don't have an intellectual disability. Because that's not what your condition creates, does it? It creates problems with the muscles and their inability to support you and maintain your balance and your posture. And therefore it's got nothing to do with intellect.

Jerusha Mather 10:30

Yeah. Definitely

Bill Gasiamis 10:32

Okay. And how old are you?

Jerusha Mather 10:37

I am 27 years old.

Bill Gasiamis 10:46

And you went to university to study. Was that after high school? Or how did that evolve for you? Your studies?

Jerusha Mather 10:58

Well, I was fortunate enough to get into biomedical science after high school. So I studied medical science in biology, physiology, chemistry, biochemistry, neuroscience and all those good stuff.

Bill Gasiamis 11:35

Which university do you attend?

Bill Gasiamis 11:44

Victoria University.

Bill Gasiamis 11:47

Victoria University in Melbourne. I'm going to share the email that you sent me at the beginning. When we first started to chat, because it sums up a lot of the challenges that you're facing and the work that you're doing to raise awareness in this space.

Fighting For Equality In Employment



Bill Gasiamis 12:09

And it says Hi, I'm Jerusha. A third year PhD candidate. I live with cerebral palsy. I am an ambitious person. Yet for the past three years I have been unable to gain entry into any medical program. Even though I am qualified. Medical Colleges in Australia make it very hard for people like me to get accepted.

Bill Gasiamis 12:32

I'm calling for top medical colleges in Australia such as Notre Dame University and University of Melbourne and Deakin University to accept applicants who live with disabilities without a graduate medical admissions test. Even with provisions of reasonable adjustments in these tests, such as dictation of answers, performing tests on a computer, and additional time and rest breaks, considerable

discrimination may still exist.

Bill Gasiamis 13:03

For example, it may be too arduous to dictate the answers or to ascribe due to the lengthy manipulation of formulas, extensive drawings and mathematical calculations. Such components are challenging to undertake mentally, and then dictate to the scribe. Additionally, the GAMSAT, MCAT I imagined that the type of tests may be difficult to complete on a computer because of the required problem solving involving the manipulation of equations, diagrams and drawings.

Bill Gasiamis 13:42

Heavily required in sections one and three which assess reasoning in humanities and reasoning in Biological and Physical Sciences, respectively. Further speed reading can be difficult for people with disabilities impacting the ability to achieve a competitive score. Most medical schools accept Indigenous students without a GAMSAT, MCAT score, a similar incentives should be made for students with disabilities.

Bill Gasiamis 14:16

That's such a logical explanation. I love that right? And then you continue and you say people with disabilities are one of the most under represented people in the medical profession. To build a representative medical workforce, colleges must do better and establish supportive policies to protective for prospective students.

Bill Gasiamis 14:41

Currently, the application process for medical colleges is quite discriminatory against students with disabilities instead of heavily relying on standardized tests. Medical schools should take a more holistic approach and find alternative ways to assess an applicant's merit.

Bill Gasiamis 15:00

Even at the interview stage research has found that medical students with visible disabilities face discrimination and are not seen as capable of the medical profession. There are many specialties a doctor with a disability can successfully practice including radiology, dermatology, general practice, psychiatry, pathology, pediatrics, and rehabilitation medicine.

Bill Gasiamis 15:26

And some supportive and assistive technology can bridge the gaps to help them

work independently, in a clinical environment. Integrating people with disabilities into the medical workforce will be transformational in reversing negative attitudes, society holds about us, representation is so important and medical colleges have the opportunity to make a real impactful change here.

Bill Gasiamis 15:54

And then you have a petition and you asked for me to sign the petition. It's a link that I will share. But it's perfectly well iterated, and the challenges that you're facing are very legitimate concerns and the very legitimate concerns that you have. And I think you're speaking for a lot of people when you're taking on this level of discrimination.

Jerusha Mather 16:26

Yeah. It's very challenging. It's been a challenging journey it's been a very hard journey, it's been really transformational, and I think we will see changes soon, hopefully soon. I am in a bit of a legal battle with the medical.

Bill Gasiamis 17:27

You're in a legal battle? Is that ongoing legal battle about your particular case? Or is it just to change a law or is it to pass a law? What's the situation with that?

Jerusha Mather 17:49

Well it is about my case, but hopefully, it will then change systematically as well. And hopefully we will see a change of course in a lot of different medical schools, hopefully this legal battle will finally bring the results that we want.

Bill Gasiamis 18:36

How long have you been on this legal journey?

Jerusha Mather 18:45

It's been a long one it started in 2020 so I think this year, I am taking the matter to federal court. And I'm trying to get what I want and what I think is fair.

Bill Gasiamis 19:45

Jerusha it sounds like you've got a lot of support from some amazing people already. There's a lot of people behind you helping you with that. Is that correct?

Jerusha Mather 19:55

Yeah. Definitely I got a lawyer, really good and keep working very hard. Although

I haven't met my court lawyer yet. We are still at the very starting stages. Like we still have to launch the complaint in to the court. My complaint was originally, with Human Rights Commission, but we couldn't resolve the issue there so now we have to take it to court.

Bill Gasiamis 21:01

Okay, so the Human Rights Commission was unable to help resolve the matter. So now you're taking the next step in the legal action.

Jerusha Mather 21:12

Yeah.

Jerusha Mathers PhD



Bill Gasiamis 21:15

Well done to you. So, you're a third-year PhD candidate. So, how long before you finish your PhD?

Jerusha Mather 21:26

About two more years.

Intro 21:30

If you've had a stroke, and you're in recovery, you'll know what a scary and confusing time it can be, you're likely to have a lot of questions going through your mind. Like, how long will it take to recover? Will I actually recover? What things should I avoid? In case I make matters worse, or doctors will explain things that obviously, you've never had a stroke before, you probably don't know what

questions to ask.

Intro 21:55

If this is you, you may be missing out on doing things that could help speed up your recovery. If you're finding yourself in that situation, stop worrying, and head to recoveryafterstroke.com where you can download a guide that will help you it's called seven questions to ask your doctor about your stroke.

Intro 22:14

These seven questions are the ones Bill wished he'd asked when he was recovering from a stroke. They'll not only help you better understand your condition they'll help you take a more active role in your recovery head to the website now recoveryafterstroke.com and download the guide it's free.

Jerusha Mather 22:35

Because of COVID there was like a very big delay, my PhD got delayed and it wasn't the ideal situation for me.

Bill Gasiamis 23:05

Yeah. So there's another two years to go and you will be a doctor?

Jerusha Mather 23:18

Yeah I can't believe it.

Bill Gasiamis 23:25

It's such a great thing to work towards. And being a doctor in your field and putting so much time and effort into your studies, the next thing is to be considered to be able to work in the field that you've spent so long studying and it's silly that you're allowed to do all this study work towards your doctorate and become a doctor in your field and then not be able to work in the field that you are highly qualified to work in.

Jerusha Mather 24:04

Yeah, I didn't get a job in research but more in medicine. I haven't studied medicine yet. I studied my PhD. But if I get into medicine. I can work as a Doctor like a Medical Doctor. So I thought about working in pediatrics or in psychiatry, but that will depend on the court case and how it goes because I know sounds ridiculous but yeah.

Bill Gasiamis 25:51

Which part sounds ridiculous?

Jerusha Mather 25:53

That I need to pass the court.

Bill Gasiamis 26:01

Absolutely that is pretty ridiculous so I speak to a lot of stroke survivors who have neurological challenges after stroke and some of them are physically disabled as well after the stroke and they might struggle to be as mobile as they used to be.

Bill Gasiamis 26:22

But I always like to remind people like that of the amazing Stephen Hawking who was somebody who had I believe he had some kind of a motor neuron disease and regardless was one of the most preeminent doctors or people in his field and was world renowned and had amazing success being able to continue his work even though he was so challenged and people seem to forget about amazing individuals like that.

Jerusha Mather 27:10

Yeah, exactly. And I think there are so many wonderful and they have lost but we will all go through challenges no matter the person, we all go through challenges it's all about your mindset and how you live your life and how you treat others and show kindness.

Jerusha Mather, A Neuroscientist And A Poet



Bill Gasiamis 28:24

Yep, I agree. You seem to have made quite an impact already on your mission. You've got quite a bit of coverage in the news, you've got an interview that was done on ABC in Australia. You have quite a lot of articles out on your story. And there seems to be some support there. One of the things I just saw when I was searching your name was that as well as a budding neuroscientist you're also a poet

Jerusha Mather 29:10

Yeah, I love writing poetry and I love writing in general so I started writing poetry when a young girl in school. I just always like writing about love things you know, grief, pain, healing, family, even just about motivation.

Bill Gasiamis 30:16

Fantastic. That's quite a broad range of different topics that you write poetry about. So if somebody wanted to find out more about your work, your poetry, any of that stuff, Are you online? Is there somewhere where they can go to, to check out the poetry that you do or the work that you're doing?

Jerusha Mather 30:40

They can check me out on Instagram. I'm always on Instagram they can check me out there, and they can contact me if they need any help on mentoring, or insight into their situation, they can reach out to me, and I'm happy to provide anything to them like any support.

The Petition



Bill Gasiamis 31:45

Fantastic. Well, what I'm going to do is I'm going to make sure that in the show notes, there's the links to all of your social media, and to your LinkedIn, for example, and I'll have a link to the change.org link where the petition resides, so that people who are happy to and can support may fill out the petition.

Jerusha Mather 32:14

Thank you. Thank you so much.

Bill Gasiamis 32:21

Is the petition still active? Is it still live?

Jerusha Mather 32:25

Yeah, definitely. It's still live and going.

Bill Gasiamis 32:35

I'm just checking it now just to see if I can access it, I think yeah, okay great. It does work, it is still live. And at the moment, you have 4019 signatures and then you're hoping to break the 5000 signature Mark? Yeah, hopefully. And therefore, it says on the website, this petition is more likely to get picked up by the local news. Is that right? So you have 4000 signatures, how long has it taken to get to 4000?

Jerusha Mather 33:24

It's taken a while, It's taken like about six months?

Bill Gasiamis 33:39

Well done That's great work. Congratulations.

Jerusha Mather 33:42

Thank you.

Bill Gasiamis 33:44

It was lovely. Getting to talk to you. It was awesome that you reached out to me. Thank you for doing that. And I hope I can make a small difference by raising awareness through our conversation. And maybe we can move that number of signatures from 4019 to a few more.

Jerusha Mather 34:05

Thank you. Thank you so much.

Bill Gasiamis 34:11

Well, thanks so much for joining us on today's episode, please comment, like, share, and leave the show a five-star review. Every interaction with the recovery after stroke podcast makes a massive difference to the way that the show gets treated by the algorithms on Google and all the other search engines.

Bill Gasiamis 34:32

So any interaction would be really useful and helpful, so that other people can easily find the podcast and make it possible for them to potentially connect with people that they feel, at least understand them and hopefully make their life in recovery after a stroke a little better.

Bill Gasiamis 34:54

If you're watching on YouTube, comment and subscribe. Hit the notification bell to get updates of new episodes as they do become available. And thanks so much for being here and listening to Jerusha's story. There will be links available in the show notes.

Bill Gasiamis 35:09

So if you go to recoveryafterstroke.com/episodes, firstly you'll be able to download the transcription of the entire episodes so that you can read through, save it, take notes, if you wish. And also, what you'll be able to do is see the links to Jerusha's social media and to the part where she would like people to go ahead and sign her petition. So thanks so much for being here. I look forward to seeing you on the next episode.

Intro 35:41

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Intro 35:58

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Intro 36:20

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Intro 36:35

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Intro 36:49

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Intro 37:02

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